

Tensions Overview

APRIL 2021

FSS WG (BML & SOUTH)

Overview of Main Tension Trends

- **An overall increase in community insecurity incidents** related to theft, crimes, and overall clashes across Lebanon. Primarily this remains an issue of intra-Lebanese tensions but is increasingly manifesting into inter-communal tensions
- **Economic and labour tensions continued with a notable rise** indicating that economic tensions are increasingly manifesting in conflict amongst the population over limited resources, as opposed to conflict between the population and their employers or institutions
- **Triggering clashes:** Clashes are increasingly taking place between demonstrators blocking the road and civilians wanting to pass. These clashes were mainly concentrated in the North and the South.
- **Shortages in main commodities and its implications on the rule of law:** The majority of economy and labor incidents took the form of police operations in March.
- **Tensions related to subsidized goods:** A surge in horizontal tensions is notable (29 percent) when compared to January 2021 (0 percent) and February 2021 (2 percent). The monopolization of subsidized items by suppliers is increasingly directing people to clash, as they compete over the limited quantities of basic goods.

Repercussions on the Tensions Landscape

As a result of the incidents occurring with regards to accessing subsidized products, physical confrontations are occurring in various regions in some instances escalating into the use of arms

Another trend is the widespread social media campaigns on three fronts against: 1) Business owners 2) State Institutions 3) Refugee populations

Indirectly, this is resulting in an increased risk of escalations during in-kind assistance distributions. This is so given the acute needs as well as the overall high propensity to violence observed.

Beirut & ML

Physical confrontations in supermarkets

Since March, physical confrontations occurred in supermarkets, specially on access to subsidized commodities.

An example is the most recent occurrence below:

On 14 April, a dispute took place in Sarba between supermarket employees (Syrian nationality) and customers on access to subsidized oil, which escalated into a physical altercations. As a result, the incident led to an injury of a citizen and security forces contained immediately the situation.

This incident was followed by a widespread social media campaign against the matter coupled with antagonistic sentiment against Syrians.

Local community riads on supermarkets

Some incidents took place between March and mid-April 2021 local community members 'raided' supermarkets to make sure that the stocked subsidized food are being fairly sold to clients, such as the incident at a supermarket beginning of April, where a group of local community individuals invaded the supermarket to control access to subsidized food. A similar trend was reporting in the southern suburb of Beirut before that.

Social Media Campaigns against ‘non-compliant supermarkets’

News have been circulated on social media shedding light on some supermarkets that are not complying with the equal distribution of subsidized commodities.

For example:

In April, news was circulated by the Union of BSS municipalities, about 5 specific supermarkets/cooperatives in the Beirut Southern Suburb, saying that they are selling subsidized oil, sugar and rice during a very limited timing to refugees, and leaving a very few quantities for Lebanese customers... News included threats of attacks to these supermarkets in order to access the subsidized food commodities by force ...

South & Nabatiyeh

Food security related incidents in the South

Access to products: several supermarkets were reported to be forbidding Syrian refugees from accessing subsidized products. Some other supermarkets limited the access of refugees to their premises to after 3 pm (this would also lead to refugees not finding all the products on the shelves)

Municipal police and local authorities' actions: in its efforts to organize the food security in the village through visits to different shops to ensure that suppliers are not hiding any stocks, Sarafand municipality was able to identify a refugee and a Lebanese who used to buy subsidized items to sell them back at higher prices.

Rhetoric was that Syrian refugees should not have access to subsidized products which are the rights for only Lebanese. The perception was that refugees buying subsidized items to sell them outside especially as they receive support from other sources